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NHS Evidence: the gateway to high quality health information



This year has seen the launch of a new gateway to health information announced by Lord Darzi in 'High quality care for all: NHS next stage review final report' (Darzi 2008). This on-line service, NHS Evidence, aims to provide easy access to a comprehensive evidence base for all health care professionals. (NICE, 2009). The address for this website is www.evidence.nhs.uk.

It has been developed from the partnership of NICE (The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) and NLH (The National Library for Health). Health care professionals accustomed to using these services will find the provision of an increased range of types of information using a single search engine.

Searching all areas of the website at the same time from the home page simplifies information retrieval. The results are ranked according to relevancy. The search must be narrowed in many cases due to the large number of results. A list of filters is provided on the left-hand side of the results page which includes 'Areas of Interest', for example clinical and public health, and 'Types of Information' such as guidelines and systematic reviews, giving the opportunity to limit the results.

Searching for information on complementary therapy and pain relief in labour yields 163 results. Selecting systematic reviews from the filters results with 28 documents. Summaries of these documents are provided with further links to full text. Any reference that is not available in full text may be obtained via the local NHS library service.

Where more concentrated searching is required specific areas of the website may be accessed via the 'Conduct a Specialist Search' link at the top of the home page. This allows simultaneous or independent searching of books and journals, databases and specialist collections.

Because of the simultaneous searching facility all areas of NHS Evidence are checked. Access is free to members of the general public as well as NHS employees except for subscription only journals and databases. Anything freely available may be displayed and printed e.g. guidelines, Cochrane reviews and some journal articles.

NHS employees are entitled to NHS Athens passwords providing access to subscription only resources. These passwords may be obtained on-line following instructions after selecting 'Register for Athens' from 'Specialist Resources' at the top of the home page. They may also be obtained from a local NHS library. Some of these libraries provide training sessions for efficient searching.

The database Pubmed, the free version of Medline, may be searched without a password. Databases requiring NHS Athens passwords include Medline, Cinahl, Embase and Psychinfo which may be searched simultaneously or separately. Duplication of less than 500 results after searching more than one database may be removed. At present this is a lengthy process and not always successful but its improvement is part of the continuing development of the site.

Full text journals include British Journal of Midwifery and the BMJ. Links to these are clearly displayed and the location of print copies at local health and medical libraries is also included.

More than 400 e-books are available. E-books may be located by entering a keyword in the search box e.g. midwifery, or by browsing the subjects. In the browse area clicking on obstetrics followed by maternal care leads to the titles Oxford handbook of midwifery, Mayes' midwifery and ABC of antenatal care.

The specialist collections focus on particular health problems, patient groups and aspects of health services. The more than 30 collections may all be searched, searched in groups or individually. Information on pregnancy and diabetes, for instance, may be retrieved by searching the Diabetes, Women's Health and Complementary and Alternative collections simultaneously.

Each specialist collection includes an Annual Evidence Update (AEU). The AEU on Pregnancy and Antenatal Care (Women's Health Specialist Library) published September 2009 provides a literature search for new research from July 2008. Previous AEU's are available via the collection's home page.

Full text guidelines, such as the RCM's 'Assessing Progress in Labour' and 'Antenatal care: Routine care for the healthy pregnant woman' published by NICE, are available. Further links to items such as patient information documents on postnatal depression and induction of labour are easily accessed from the headings of different document types.

Clinical Knowledge Summaries provide information aimed at primary and first contact care. These have links to journal articles for further research and patient information leaflets. Selecting pregnancy, for instance, from the topics column, followed by the link nausea and vomiting gives advice for the healthcare professional and a leaflet for the patient.

In autumn 2009 a second release of the service occurred. The content is now subject to a quality assurance process. NHS Evidence-approved information will be indicated by an accreditation mark. This scheme is overseen by an

independent committee of health and social care professionals set up to ensure it is unbiased. (Nonis, 2009).

NHS Eyes on Evidence is a monthly e-bulletin giving updates on the development of the website and includes contributions from readers. Subscription to this is free and accessed via 'About Us' on the home page.

References

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